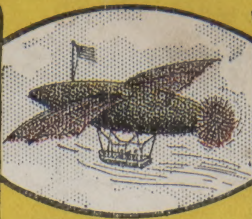


FRANK READE



WEEKLY MAGAZINE.

Containing Stories of Adventures on Land, Sea & in the Air.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Application made for Second-Class Entry at N. Y. Post-Office.

No. 41.

NEW YORK, AUGUST 7, 1903.

Price 5 Cents.

ACROSS THE FROZEN SEA; DR. FRANK READE, JR.'S ELECTRIC SNOW CUTTER.

By "NONAME"



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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

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ACROSS THE FROZEN SEA;

OR,

Frank Reade, Jr.'s Electric Snow Cutter.

By "NONAME."

CHAPTER I.

AN ARGUMENT PROVED.

"I tell you, Col. Heeley, it is not only possible to reach the North Pole, but I have devised a way by which it is easy to do so."

This certainly sounds like a strong statement, but the man who made it meant every word he said, and was, moreover, a reliable person.

He was no other than Frank Reade, Jr., the world's most famous inventor, whose history we need hardly repeat here. Suffice it to say that his home was in Readestown, and that he was the youthful inventor of the Airship, the Submarine Boat, and many other wonderful devices, with which he traveled in various parts of the world, either in quest of adventure, or upon some mission of a philanthropic nature.

Frank Reade, Jr., was a very wealthy young man, and constantly adding to his fortune through the medium of his inventions.

But his wealth and his fame did not spoil him. He did not consider himself too good or personally exalted to shake hands with the commonest honest laborer.

Col. Heeley, the gentleman to whom he addressed the words with which we open this story, was also a famous man.

He was a noted Arctic traveler and explorer, and had only just returned from the frozen north, one of four survivors of a party of sixty hardy men.

The remaining fifty-six unfortunate souls were sleeping in icy graves.

They had ventured into the Arctic with the steam yacht Jane, and had become nipped in the ice. Two seasons spent in the cold clime had dwindled their number down so that when the government cutter Bear found them and rescued them, only four were left.

This disastrous result of his Arctic efforts had discouraged Heeley.

He now declared it impossible to reach the North Pole.

"It can't be done!" he declared; "the ice forms an impenetrable barrier."

"Yes, it can be done!" declared Frank.

"Perhaps you can tell how?"

"I can."

"Well, tell me how a ship is going to penetrate that fearful ice wall."

"I would never compel the ship to do it. My plan is to go over the ice."

"Over the surface?" asked the colonel.

"Yes."

Col. Heeley shook his head.

"Pshaw!" he declared, "that is all right. You will find that the dogs cannot haul sledges that far. The further you go the scarcer are provisions."

"Ah, but I would not think of such slow progress."

"You would not take dogs?"

"No."

The colonel looked amazed.

"Why, my dear man, you are crazy!" he declared. "You could never go across that waste on foot."

"Neither would I attempt it."

The veteran explorer looked at Frank in the sheerest of amazement. Then he managed to recover himself sufficiently to ask:

"Well, how would you do it?"

"By electric snow cutter."

"Electric snow cutter?"

"Yes."

The colonel whistled and twirled his cane.

"Come now, Frank," he said, "I know you are a famous inventor. But are you in earnest? Have you invented such a wonderful thing?"

"I have invented a cutter which will travel over snow and ice with the greatest of ease and great speed."

"I should like to see it."

"You shall. It is all completed. Do you know what I built it for?"

"No."

"I was going to your rescue. Just as I got everything ready, the Bear brought you home."

"Well, old friend," said the colonel, with some show of emotion, "I can assure you that I appreciate your kindly motive. I am more than interested."

"Come with me, and you shall see the new invention."

At the moment they had been standing on the sidewalk in Readestown, not far from the entrance to Frank's machine shop.

The colonel had run out to Readestown to make Frank a brief visit. This accounts for his presence in the place at this moment.

Frank led the way to the gate. He pulled a bell-wire.

In a moment a small wicket opened. The comical mug of an Irishman appeared. His face lit up at sight of the visitors.

"Shure, Misther Frank, an' is it yesilf?" he cried. "It's glad I am to see yez."

"Yes, Barney," said Frank. "Open the gate and let us in."

"All roight, sor!"

The Celt was an old and faithful attache of Frank's establishment. There was also a negro, black as coal, and named Pomp. These two adjuncts Frank took with him wherever he went.

The gate swung open and the two men entered.

The negro was just crossing the yard.

"Pomp," said Frank, authoritatively, "I wish to show Col. Heeley the Snow Cutter."

"A'right, sah," replied the darky with an obsequiousness. "Dis way, gemmens!"

The two men followed the darky into a high-arched building.

In the center of this was a broad and deep tank. There were twenty-five feet of water in it.

It led out into a canal beyond the building, and this canal by a series of locks was connected with the river, which led down to the sea.

Passing by this, they entered another building, and here upon a broad platform was the object of their interest.

The new invention, the Electric Snow Cutter, was before them.

Col. Heeley stood gazing at it a moment silently.

"Wonderful!" he finally exclaimed.

What the colonel saw was a long, square body of steel, with rounded front, set upon transverse runners with broad tires.

This was so designed that the cutter could travel upon the surface of the lightest snow.

Above the main body of the cutter was a cabin with windows. A guard rail extended along the sides, and a door opened forward.

Above was a deck, also provided with a guard rail. Forward on this deck was a pilot-house with plate glass windows.

Over the pilot-house was a searchlight of enormous power. Just to the rear of the pilot-house was a single high mast with a sail and a pennant above it.

Aft was an upper cabin with circular windows. At the rear of the cutter was the means of propulsion.

This looked not unlike the stern wheel of a Mississippi steamer.

But the blades of the paddles were lighter and concave. These dipped deep into the snow, or caught their saw-like edges upon the smoothest ice, and impelled the cutter forward.

There were also snow and ice brakes to govern the speed of the machine on a swift or steep descent.

This is a meager description of the outward part of the cutter.

Frank now led the way into the cabin.

Col. Heeley was deeply impressed.

"Upon my word!" he exclaimed. "I have never seen the equal of this. But how do you get your propelling power, Frank?"

"Electric engines," replied the inventor.

"Dynamos?"

"Well, in part, yes."

"I don't see how you can generate sufficient power in such a limited space."

"I have powerful systems of storage which is a secret of mine. I can depend on my engines for an indefinite length of time."

"It is truly wonderful! Show me the engines."

"I will!" replied Frank, "but first I want you to take a look at the furnishings of the cabin."

The cabin of the Snow Cutter was certainly beautifully furnished.

Of course the space was not great, but every inch was economically utilized and furnished luxuriously.

In the main cabin there were shelves of rare books and maps. Passing into the next compartment there were stands of arms and stores of ammunition.

"This is the gun room!" declared Frank. "Here we have all the paraphernalia necessary to stand off a savage foe!"

"An indispensable adjunct!" agreed the colonel; "there are many savage bands of Esquimaux in the Arctic regions."

Next they came into a small compartment where was a fully equipped dresser and dining table. Beyond this was a small kitchen, presided over by Pomp.

Upon the upper deck were the staterooms for five travelers.

This constituted the main features of the machine's interior, save the pilot-house and the engine room.

The latter contained a wheel by which the forward runners of the Cutter could be turned in any desired direction.

Below the main cabin was the electrical engine room.

This was not at all a large compartment, having sufficient space for one man to get around in conveniently.

Barney had charge of this, but his presence was needed there only at stated times.

The electrical machinery was intricate and delicate in construction, though powerful.

This completed the tour of the cutter. The two men came out upon the upper deck, and Col. Heeley sank into a camp chair.

"Well, I declare," he exclaimed, heartily, "this is beyond ordinary belief. I have never seen the equal of it in my life. Frank, I would not miss going with you, for I know that you will succeed."

"You shall go if you choose!" declared the young inventor. "As for succeeding, I do not mean to fail!"

"And you will not!"

"How soon can you be ready?"

"Within twelve hours. When will you start?"

"I am anxious to get away within two days. We have only to put provisions aboard the cutter to be ready to start at once!"

"It shall be so!" cried Heeley, but he suddenly inquired: "How will you get the cutter into the Arctic?"

"I have already provided for that!" replied Frank. "I shall float a barge into the basin which you saw in the other building. Then out through the canal and into the river the cutter will be floated. A tug will there take the barge down to the salt water. There a shall have a fast steam yacht, the Iris, in waiting to take us as far up Smith Sound as we can go. The rest will be easy."

CHAPTER II.

ON BOARD THE IRIS.

Col. Heeley was very enthusiastic over Frank's plans.

He believed at last that a solution of the Arctic difficulty had been found. They would be sure to reach the North Pole.

When he left Readestown a few hours later he was in the highest of spirits.

The colonel proceeded at once to his home, and quickly made arrangements for the great trip.

Of course, so wonderful an undertaking could hardly be kept secret. It soon spread over the entire country, and when the time came for the start Readestown was besieged by an army of cranks, of scientific and of newspaper men.

All sorts of queer offers and propositions were made to Frank.

"Golly, Marse Frank," cried Pomp, "I done fink if yo' was to satisfy all dem peoples yo' would nebber be able to get away at all."

"You are right, Pomp," agreed Frank. "I shall not even try to do that."

Every preparation was finally completed.

The machine was well stocked with provisions. It was loaded safely on the barge and the start was made.

A few days later the steam yacht *Iris*, Captain Irvin Bel-den, was under way for the Arctic.

Then and not until then did those in the party fully realize the enormity of the task they had undertaken.

It was certainly not a light one. The chances were not large of success.

Many things could happen. The Snow Cutter might become disabled, the electrical machinery might collapse, and the party become buried forever in the wild northern wastes.

This was not a pleasant subject to reflect upon.

Barney and Pomp, however, contributed largely to the removing of the sense of dread.

They were both reckless of danger and bound to be lively and jovial in spite of everything.

As the *Iris* steamed rapidly northward, Pomp brought out his banjo and played and sang rollicking plantation melodies.

Barney, not to be outdone, produced an antiquated fiddle, out of which he got wonderful music.

"Shure, I cum av a race av fiddlers," he declared. "Be me soul, me ancisters played before Brian Boru whin Oire-land was free and a kingdom av its own."

"I suppose every Irishman longs to see the return of that day?" asked the colonel.

"Yez are right," cried Barney. "Bad cess to ould Eng-land for oppressin' us."

"Golly! I don't fink it do yo' one bit ob good, Irish!" said Pomp, sniffing contemptuously.

"And phwy not, yez black ape?" flashed the excitable Irishman.

"Yo' don' want to leave America, does yo'? Wha' good it do yo' to hab Ireland set free no mo' dan it do me any good fo' to set Africa free?"

This looked more logical to the Celt, who subsided.

"Shure, I don't think anyone wud be fool enough ter set Afriky free. You don't know phwat patriotism is."

"Don' yo' be sassy, I'ish," remonstrated Pomp. "Yo' know jes' about wha' yo' am gwine to git if I git mah mad up."

"Begorra, ye'll get a good bating," declared Barney, vig-
orously.

"Yo' fink so, does yo'?"

"Bejabbers, I know it."

Colonel Heeley had gone down into the yacht's cabin with Frank.

The two jokers were under no restraint. They faced each other threateningly.

Some of the jack tars who took it seriously now drew near, and cried:

"Keelhaul him, shipmate. He insulted you."

"Give him a flipper in the bowsprit," urged another. "Spoil his figgerhead."

"Lively there, lads! Settle it in the right way. Go aboard of him."

The two jokers were ripe for a ruction.

Not since leaving port had they indulged in a friendly set-to, and here was a royal opportunity.

They needed no urging.

"Am yo' gwine to take back wha' yo' said, I'ish?" asked Pomp, curtly.

"Divil a bit av it," replied the Celt, stubbornly. "It's yersilf should apologize to me."

"Yo' fink so?"

"I tell yez so."

"Den look out fo' yo'self. Ki dar!"

Pomp lowered his head and made a rush for Barney.

The Celt dodged just in time, and the darky's head struck the mainmast with such force that it actually made the top hamper tremble.

Such a blow would have brained an ordinary white man.

But Pomp didn't even wince.

He turned quickly and made another rush at Barney.

This time the Celt failed to get out of the way quickly enough.

But he managed to biff Pomp a lusty crack across the ribs.

It did not stop him, however.

And Pomp caught Barney with his battering-ram head full in the side.

The Irishman let out a great grunt, which was like the bursting of a bottle of champagne.

Then he grappled with his adversary.

The jack tars yelled with delight.

Over and over the two jokers rolled upon the deck.

It was nip and tuck.

Now one had the upper hand, then the other. How it would have terminated if much longer protracted it is hard to say.

But an incident suddenly terminated the affair.

In the deck there was a large skylight, below which was the galley and the cook's tables.

Suddenly Barney lost his grip on Pomp.

The latter sprang to his feet for the purpose of making another blow with his head.

He retreated backward, and then—

Crash! Bang! Clatter!

Down through the skylight went Pomp, carrying the glass with him.

The colored cook of the *Iris* had an immense pan of soft

dough in the middle of the table, all ready to mix into bread.

Pomp's head dove straight into this. He keeled over and rolled upon the galley floor, carrying table, pan, cooking utensils and all with him.

The dough fastened in Pomp's wool, and also stuck in his mouth, nose and ears, nearly strangling him.

He managed to clear his mouth and yell:

"Lordy massy! dis chile am done killed! I'se broke mah neck! Sabe me!"

Then, spluttering and gasping, he emerged from the dough pan only to find himself confronting the irate cook.

Pomp scrambled to his feet and was a sight to behold.

His face and hair were no longer black.

The jack tars and Barney were crowded at the skylight above. At the comical spectacle they whooped with laughter.

This partly brought Pomp to his senses. When he realized that he was not badly hurt he was mad.

Somebody else was mad, too.

This was Benjamin, the cook.

He dropped his apron and clutched his rolling pin.

"Wha' for yo' cum down in here dat a-way fo'?" he yelled. "Yo' nasty black nigger, yo'! I'se gwine to take it out ob yo' hide!"

Benjamin was a mulatto, and had the traditional antipathy for the coal black negro.

This in turn fired Pomp.

"Huh! don' yo' be obstreperous, yo' washed out nigger!" he retorted. "I didn't cum here ob mah own free will, yo' may be sure."

"Wha' am dat yo' call me? Washed out, eh? Yo' neber wash yo'self, anyway."

"I don' try fo' to make mase'f a white man!" retorted Pomp.

This was enough for Benjamin.

He made a furious pass at Pomp with the rolling pin.

The latter caught it on his cranium, and it glanced off each time like water from a duck's back.

Then Benjamin remembered and reached low for his adversary's shins.

This was Pomp's opportunity.

Quick as a flash he lowered his head and charged. He struck Benjamin full in the bread basket.

It was like the stroke of a battering ram.

The elder darky gasped and went down like a fallen tree.

And while he was gasping and floundering on the floor Pomp dashed out of the door and made his escape.

This created a fresh roar of merriment from above.

In fact, so great was the uproar that Captain Belden was

called on deck. This ended the episode, but Benjamin made a mental vow.

"I jes' get square wif dat big bloke of a nigger afo' dis y'age am ended, an' yo' bet I will."

But he did not. The necessary opportunity did not occur.

But Pomp had a chance to get square with Barney later on, and just how he did it we shall see.

The Iris kept propitiously on her northward way.

But when off the coast of Newfoundland she ran into a terrible storm.

For several days it was a hard question as to whether she would weather it or not.

The hatches were battened down, and the crew worked for their lives; but finally the sea abated.

Calm seas now became the order until well up into Davis Strait.

Then again the seas became rough and boisterous. Great quantities of pack ice were encountered, and monster icebergs were on every hand.

It was not the safest kind of work threading a way in and out among them.

After dark the searchlight from the Snow Cutter was employed, and men were obliged to keep a perpetual position in the bow.

Gradually, day after day, the Iris worked her way into Baffin's Bay.

This was found reasonably clear, and for some days once more the yacht rode in clear water.

Then at the entrance to Smith Sound the ice barrier was met.

Doubtless the Iris could have penetrated further.

But there was the risk which Captain Belden did not care to assume.

So the Iris came finally to an anchorage in a little ice-bound cove, and preparations were made for transporting the Snow Cutter to the snowy shore. The great Arctic region was before them, and the Arctic explorers realized that their perils had only just begun.

CHAPTER III.

AN ARMY OF BEARS.

It was bitterly cold, and every man on board had donned fur suits.

The Iris rolled in the pitching waters of the ice-bound bay restlessly.

The means of transporting the Cutter to the shore had been provided for beforehand.

The materials for a raft were brought alongside the ship from the hold. This was speedily put together.

It was of enormous dimensions.

After it was completed the Snow Cutter was brought from the hold by taking up sections of the deck.

It was lowered upon the raft, and then the latter was towed ashore.

The Snow Cutter glided off upon the snowy surface like a bird.

Cheers went up from all.

"She is a beauty!" cried Col. Heeley.

"Upon my word, gentlemen, I wish I was going with you!" declared Captain Belden.

"I'll tell you what you can do," said Frank.

"What?"

"Be here on this spot six months from now. We will be ready then to return."

"Do you expect to go to the North Pole and return in that time?"

"I do."

"Very well!" agreed the captain. "I will then return to St. John's, Newfoundland, and winter there. Six months from to-day I will be on this spot."

"Very good!"

"If you are not here——"

Frank made a deprecatory motion.

"Go back and come again in six months. If we are not here then you will know that we will never return."

"And that the frozen North has claimed four more victims!"

"Exactly."

"But we shall return!" said Col. Heeley, confidently. "I am sure of that."

"If you do!" said Belden, earnestly, "you will win everlasting fame!"

The captain went back to the yacht.

The raft was taken in pieces and stored in an ice cave upon the shore. Then the yacht weighed anchor.

Those left upon the Arctic shore to face what perils they knew not watched the Iris depart.

Pomp saw Benjamin's chocolate face at one of the ports.

The cook was shaking his fist savagely and saying:

"I fix yo' when yo' come back, yo' ace ob spades! I hab it in fo' yo'!"

Then Pomp did a very ungallant thing. He thumbed his nose to the departing cook.

But the Iris had soon faded from sight, and Frank's voice was heard:

"All aboard for the North Pole!"

All scrambled aboard the Snow Cutter.

A mighty icy plain extended as far as the eye could reach.

Heading directly for the northward, Frank let the Snow Cutter out for a swift run.

It was the trial trip.

But it was more than a success.

Mercy! How she did speed over the smooth plain.

The stern paddles revolved like a flash and drove the Cutter ahead at railroad speed.

Mile after mile sped by.

The sun was visible only for a short while at intervals above the horizon.

The Arctic night and winter were coming on rapidly. Great reverberations went booming over the icy waters as the hand of Jack Frost tightened things up.

Truly it was a wonderful scene.

The icy country presented a diversity and variety which baffles description.

There were great plains of ice as smooth and level as the floor. Then there were mighty peaks and crags of sheer ascent to the height of hundreds of feet.

There was also what is called the ice pack where the bosom of the ocean has upheaved and thrown the ice into all manner of mighty piles.

These ice packs could not be crossed by the Snow Cutter.

It was necessary to go around them, and this often involved a detour of many miles.

But still the Cutter kept pushing its way rapidly toward the Pole.

For several days all were intently engaged in watching the curious phenomena of the country.

During this time no thrilling incident occurred.

But one day there came the first of a thrilling train of them.

Barney was at the wheel, and the Cutter was speeding along the base of an icy cliff, when suddenly there smote upon the air a mighty roar like thunder.

The Cutter pitched and tossed under the motion of the ice field.

For safety Barney brought it to a stop.

Luckless move!

It was just under the cliff. Down from above slid a dislodged pinnacle of ice.

It lay right across the Cutter's bow, and held it pinched.

Col. Heeley had seen it coming, but his cry of warning was too late. The Cutter was entrapped.

While the earthquake caused the ice plain to heave and pitch, and great quantities of ice to come tumbling down from the cliff.

There was great danger that the Cutter would be crushed.

But very fortunately no other large fragment struck her.

There she was held pinioned safe enough. How badly she was crushed, if at all, could not be seen.

"Golly! I done fink we am in a bad fix now!" cried Pomp.

"Bejabbers, that's so," agreed Barney.

"If only this commotion would cease there'd be a chance for us!" said Heeley.

Then the commotion ceased.

The adventurers rushed out on deck to inspect their position. It was not a flattering one.

The Cutter seemed hopelessly wedged in her position.

To cut the ice away would seem like a long, hard job. In fact, it seemed out of the question.

The explorers with long faces exchanged glances.

"We're done for!" exclaimed Heeley.

But Frank said:

"We won't give up yet."

He was about to return to the cabin when his attention, as well as that of the others, was attracted by a queer sound and sight.

The sound was a succession of grunts and deep roars.

The sight was a literal army of bears coming down the face of the cliff.

There seemed a score of them, and they were of the white species.

The Arctic bear is not a foe to be despised. Not one in the party but knew this well.

This avalanche of savage beasts was coming straight toward the Snow Cutter.

"Begorra, they're afther us!" gasped Barney.

Now if there is one thing an Irishman is afraid of it is a bear.

Barney was no exception, and he rushed into the cabin and reappeared with his rifle.

Before Frank or any of the others could interfere he had drawn aim and fired at the beasts.

The bullet struck one of them, and as chance had it, in a vital part. The bear fell dead.

"Whurroo!" cried Barney; "there's wan av the beasts gone to his account. Shure here goes fer another."

With which he fired again. This time his shot only wounded one of the bears.

The wounded bear with a howl of pain started for the Cutter and the others followed him pell-mell.

Frank saw that the situation was a critical one. He shouted:

"Into the cabin, everybody. Lively, or they'll be upon us."

Into the cabin all sprang. They were none too soon.

The bears reached the rail of the Cutter and clambered over it.

The frail structure trembled beneath their weight.

With their powerful claws Frank knew that they could do much damage to the invention.

So he cried:

"To arms, all. Open the loopholes, Barney. Kill all you can!"

Then the battle began.

The bears seemed almost human in their powers of perception, and to know that their foes were in the cabin, which they strove to invade.

They clawed at the door and the windows, and would undoubtedly have effected an entrance ere long.

The shots fired by the defenders did little good, for it was only at times that the beasts came within range.

Frank saw that different tactics must be employed, and at once.

He did not hesitate to do this.

He went below and secured a long coil of wire.

Up into the pilot-house he went, after having connected the wire with the powerful dynamo.

Then he stepped out on the deck.

The bears were on the lower deck.

Frank held the wire in his hands, which were protected by insulated gloves.

The bears saw him, and with fierce growls essayed to climb up to the upper deck.

But Frank uncoiled a long piece of the wire and flung it down among them.

The result was thrilling.

Whenever a wire touched a bear the brute was knocked from the deck of the Cutter as if by the blow of a giant.

Nearly every one of the bears received a stunning shock, which was not powerful enough to kill, but to stun them.

They returned more angrily to the attack.

But Frank maintained his position coolly, and kept throwing the wire among them. The bears could not get near him.

And repeated doses of this kind of medicine finally drove them away in actual terror.

They retreated to recesses of the cliff, where they made the air hideous with their growls and roars.

The defenders of the Cutter cheered heartily at this result of the wonderful ingenuity of Frank Reade, Jr.

When the young inventor returned to the cabin, Col. Heeley cried enthusiastically:

"Frank, you're a genius and a hero. I should never have known enough to repel those bears in that way. It beats anything I ever saw."

"But we have more serious work before us," declared Frank, "and that is to extricate the Cutter from its present position."

"Can it be done?" asked the colonel, somewhat doubtfully.

"It must be done!" said Frank, determinedly. "There is and must be a way. If we do not succeed our fate is sealed, and we must die in this terrible place."

CHAPTER IV.

THE ESQUIMAUX.

Frank's declaration was certainly a thrilling and terrifying one.

It was indeed a fearful thing to contemplate that they might have to perish in that distant part of the world. The thought was horrible.

"If there is any way within our power to get out of this," said Col. Heeley, "let us employ it."

Frank now went outside and began to study the situation.

It did not take him long to decide fully what was best to do. He returned to the cabin.

From a case in the gun room he took a couple of long eyliners. Col. Heeley was at his shoulder.

"Dynamite!" said the colonel, with a show of apprehension.

"That is what is it," replied Frank.

The colonel was a trifle pale.

"Is it really safe?" he asked.

"We have got to take our chances," said Frank. "I think it will be."

Frank motioned to Barney and Pomp, who followed him.

All went forward, and Barney carried a long iron bar, with a pointed tip. By Frank's direction he and Pomp began to drill a deep hole in the berg.

Frank had studied carefully the position of the Snow Cutter.

He did not intend to take any great chances. He believed that he was all right. It seemed the only immediate course.

Of course there was the possibility that the ice mass might cave and fall upon the cabin of the Cutter.

If it should it would very likely crush it entirely.

But if it fell the other way the Cutter would be delivered. Barney and Pomp worked vigorously.

They had made good progress at the expiration of an hour. A deep hole had been drilled in the ice.

It was large enough for the insertion of the cartridge. Frank lowered it into the hole and attached an electric wire.

Then the drill hole was properly tamped and all retired to the deck of the cutter to witness the result.

Frank connected the wire with the dynamos, and all was ready for the firing of the cartridge.

It was a critical moment.

But Frank did not lose his nerve. There was but a moment's hesitation and he pressed the key.

Boom—crash—clatter!

The great iceberg trembled, cracked, and part of it slid away upon the other side.

There was a moment of silence after the explosion. Then, as the result was seen, a mighty cheer went up.

The Cutter was not entirely liberated.

But a commencement had been successfully made. Barney and Pomp went over the rail.

They had begun to drill another hole. Frank and the colonel were shaking hands warmly over the result.

At this turn of affairs an incident of most thrilling sort happened, and which put a new face upon matters.

The first warning of any impending danger was given by the colonel.

He had chanced to glance down into the ice valley below, when he beheld a sight which gave him a thrill.

There, across the ice waste, was a huge body of fur-clad men, making their way toward the Cutter.

The colonel saw by their squat figures that they were Esquimaux.

They were armed with long spears and bows, and by their number seemed imbued with a hostile spirit.

"Frank!" shouted the colonel, excitedly, "there's danger ahead!"

Frank turned in astonishment.

"What!" he cried.

"Look!"

The colonel pointed down into the valley. Frank saw the Esquimaux and gave an exclamation of dismay.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "those fellows are bent upon mischief, I know they are!"

Barney and Pomp came rushing aboard in alarm.

For a time there was no little excitement in the Cutter's crew.

But Frank quickly made preparations for a reception of the foe.

There was no time to lose.

The Esquimaux evidently took the Cutter for an ice-nipped ship, and regarded it as lawful prey.

All the Esquimaux bands in this region, Frank knew, were hostile to the white men.

There was no doubt but that these fellows meant fight, and as they were a treacherous, evil set, it was well to be on guard.

Frank brought a wire from the cabin and made a circuit of the deck with it.

He connected it with the dynamos in such a way that he could turn on the current at any moment he saw fit.

"That will keep them from coming aboard, I think!" he declared. "I believe one good shock will be enough for them!"

The travelers had all sought refuge in the cabin. A hundred yards distant the Arctic natives halted.

They brandished their weapons and uttered savage cries, but did not at once venture to come to the attack.

Barney was at one of the loopholes with his rifle.

"Bejabers, I've a moind to give them a shot!" he cried.

"No!" cried Frank. "You must not. Let them make the first aggressive move."

This proved a wise move.

Seeing that the defenders of the Cutter did not seem disposed to meet them half way in their savage demonstrations, their attitude changed greatly.

The Esquimaux is as cunning and treacherous as an Indian. At once they changed their tactics.

They were silent for some time. Their demeanor was now very different.

"They are coming to their senses," said Col. Heeley. "They know very well they can gain nothing by such tomfoolery."

"Begorra, mebbe they'll be afther makin' frinds with us," cried Barney.

But Frank shook his head.

"Not much," he declared positively. "That is not their game. All must stand ready for lively action. I will try and talk with them."

So Frank opened a window and shouted to them in English.

But they did not at once understand. Finally one of their number drew nearer.

He seemed to have a knowledge of the English language, and replied:

"I Iglock man. Heap big warrior! You 'Merican men, eh?"

"Yes!" replied Frank. "I am an American. I will be your friend!"

"Give Iglook man firewater, heap drink, we be friends!"

"Not much!" replied Frank, tersely. "I can't give you a drop of whisky. But I'll be friends with you if you wish!"

The Esquimaux seemed disgusted, and, perhaps, a bit angry.

"Iglook man no fool! 'Merican man travel in sledge without dogs. Iglook man like sledge for himself."

"Oh, you would, eh?" said Frank, with sarcasm. "Your wants are small. Is there anything else you'd like?"

"Gib Iglook man sledge!"

"Perhaps," said Frank, ironically; "but what else will you have?"

"Gib me gun, me kill walrus. Whale all so quick. Say so?"

"You avaricious dog!" cried Frank, angrily. "I'll tell you what I'll give you, and that's one ounce of cold lead if you venture to press your demands any further!"

The Esquimaux was very angry. The last speech took all the good nature out of him.

"Hi-hi!" he yelled, in a piping voice. "Esquimaux kill quick, heap kill you no gib it to him. What say?"

"Bejabers, let me give him a polite reminder that it's not a lot av poltroons he's talkin' to!" cried Barney. "Shure, I'll only cut off a bit of his ear."

The Celt, and Pomp as well, were itching for a shot at the foe.

But Frank would not consent.

"Do not fire until we are fired upon!" he declared. "Just now we must stand on the defensive."

"I haven't any doubt but that we've got to fight the dogs, Frank," said Col. Heeley, with conviction.

"That may be true!" agreed the young inventor, "but you must admit that the conservative course is the best."

The Esquimaux spokesman was hurling epithets and threats at the Snow Cutter's crew. But to his evident surprise they did not scare worth a cent.

"Come!" shouted Frank, finally, "begone, you vile wretch! We have stood enough of your impudence!"

Frank placed the barrel of his gun through a loophole.

The Esquimaux wretch, however, would not heed the warning. Frank stood it as long as he could, and then said:

"We will fire into the air over his head. That may frighten him."

Barney and Pomp were only too eager for this.

Cra-ack! The three rifles blended. Col. Heeley did not fire.

The Esquimaux spokesman proved himself a coward. He fairly turned a back somersault in his terror, and fled down the incline.

When he joined his companions they were much excited.

They made the air hideous with their yells, and it was evident now that a fight with them was unavoidable.

"We have got to shed human blood," said Frank. "I am sorry for that."

The Esquimaux were not long in coming to the attack.

They deployed right and left in a long line, and came swarming up the slope.

The danger of such an attack could easily be seen. Could they gain the deck without hindrance of material sort they would have the travelers at their mercy.

But the electric wire Frank believed would stop them.

He held the key in his hand ready to press.

Barney and Pomp and Col. Heeley were at the loopholes.

The Esquimaux were now within easy range.

Col. Heeley gave the word:

"Fire!"

The three rifles spoke, and with deadly effect.

As fast as the repeaters could be worked the Esquimaux went down.

But there were so many of them that this limited fire was not sufficient to stay them.

They came on in a solid body. They made the air hideous with their yells.

Nearer every moment they drew.

It was a critical time.

Frank held his finger upon the key. He was waiting only for a favorable moment.

A thousand painful thoughts coursed through his brain.

What if the wire failed? What if the dynamos failed? But—the young inventor smiled at the absurdity of this thought.

"Impossible!" he muttered. "It cannot fail. We shall repulse them. We must do it, or we are certainly lost."

CHAPTER V.

BREAKING THE ICE BARRIER.

Then Frank pressed the electric key and sent the current madly surging over the wire.

He had employed a sufficient number of volts to give the attacking party a repelling and painful shock.

He could have made the contact a fatal one, but he did not wish to do this, unless absolutely obliged to.

He believed that the shock would terrify them and be sufficient. The next moment the crash came.

The Esquimaux were coming right aboard the Cutter.

They evidently believed their victory surely won. But a surprise was in store for them.

The first man struck the wire; he turned a back somersault and landed head downward in a drift.

The next to essay scaling the rail received the same treatment.

As fast as the Esquimaux came up they were hurled back as with the leviathan power of a Samson.

They were piled in struggling heaps under the Cutter's runners. In vain they tried to get onto the deck.

They might as well have tried to bring down the moon, so powerful was the work of the deadly wires.

Of course they did not understand the cause of their discomfiture. If they had they would not have failed to avoid the deadly wire.

But each one in essaying to gain the deck was bound to come in contact with the wire.

Barney and Pomp used their rifles to advantage, but Frank, seeing that there was little use in such wholesale slaughter, finally checked them.

The Esquimaux were obliged to desist in their attack, and finally fell back defeated.

They retreated incontinently to the cover of some ice cakes, and there made the air hideous with baffled howls.

The defenders of the Cutter had won a signal victory.

There was cause for mutual congratulation. But the end was not yet.

The Esquimaux did not seem inclined to give up their game so easily.

They began to make camp on the spot. Finally another party with dogs and sledges came to join them.

Frank saw at a glance what their game was, and he was not a little dismayed.

"Upon my word," he exclaimed, ruefully, "they mean to besiege us, don't they?"

"Besiege us!" ejaculated the colonel. "Frank, you're right; we're in for it now."

"Begorra, it's a bad scrape!" said Barney, dubiously. "Phwativer will we do, Mister Frank?"

The young inventor was puzzled, but he would not yield to despair. His face wore a resolute expression.

"We will fix matters all right," he muttered. "Of course they have the best of us. They can wait out there an indefinite length of time, while we must depend upon a limited supply of provisions."

"Correct," agreed the colonel; "but cannot we attack them openly, make a sally as it were?"

"They would overwhelm us," declared Frank. "No, there is a better way."

"What?"

"We must manage to get the Cutter out of her present position."

"Can we do it?"

"We must do it."

"I certainly hope it may be done," said the colonel. "And I have great faith in your ability, Frank."

"Of course, in going outside to work we will have to run the risk of getting cut down by their arrows!" said Frank, "but I believe it can be done just the same."

Frank was not long in formulating what he believed would be a successful plan.

It was easy enough to go out upon the opposite side of the Cutter, and escape the aim of the Esquimaux, for this was the side next the cliff.

But in order to work upon the bow of the Cutter it was necessary to become slightly exposed.

Yet the young inventor determined to take the risk.

He knew that something desperate had got to be done.

So he said to Barney and Pomp:

"Keep up a steady fire upon those villains. Whenever you see a head appear above the ice cakes, fire upon it."

"Misther Frank," said Barney, trembling with eagerness, "are yez going out to work on the ice?"

"I am," replied Frank.

"Shure, sor, but yez ought not to expose yesilf in such a manner."

"But I must."

"Och, worra, worra; wud yez let me go, sor?"

"No!" replied Frank, resolutely. "You must follow my instructions closely. Don't fail to obey."

Barney said no more.

But as Frank was about to go forth upon his perilous mission he felt a hand upon his shoulder.

He turned in surprise.

Col. Heeley stood by him.

"Frank, I am going with you," he said. "You are not going alone!"

"It will be foolish for you to incur the risk," said the young inventor.

"Nevertheless I shall do so."

The colonel's manner was very resolute, and Frank said no more. Both went out on deck.

They were now upon the opposite side of the Snow Cutter, and protected from the arrows of the Esquimaux by the cabin.

But presently as they made their way forward they must be exposed.

Frank made a dash forward.

A yell went up from the Esquimaux as his form burst into view.

A cloud of arrows came hurtling to the spot. One penetrated Frank's sleeve, another bounded from his fur cap, and a third struck the steel drill in his hand.

But fortunately not one did him bodily harm.

And in firing the Esquimaux had exposed themselves. Barney and Pomp worked their repeating rifles.

And so vigorous a volley did they pour into the foes' midst that they were glad to retreat behind the ice cakes.

This gave Frank an opportunity to work.

He dodged beneath the huge pile of ice which wedged the bow of the Cutter.

The next moment Col. Heeley was by his side.

They were in a position now that was not so exposed to the Esquimaux' fire. And an idea now occurred to Frank. He wondered that he had not thought of it before.

"Here we are, Colonel," he cried.

"It was a close shave."

"Yes."

"Where will you work?"

"I don't see why we can't work right here," cried Frank; "we shall not be exposed either."

"Right! Let us try it."

Frank at once began to dig upward into the berg.

The two men worked like beavers. All the while Barney and Pomp kept the Esquimaux occupied.

For nearly two hours the desultory battle went on.

The deck of the cutter was covered with arrows and javelins. Many of the natives had fallen victims to the unerring aim of Barney and Pomp.

The hole was finally drilled large enough to receive the cartridges.

Frank inserted them and connected the wire. This discharge, it was believed, would free the Cutter.

Now once more it became necessary for Frank and the colonel to risk the fire of the Esquimaux upon their return to the cabin.

They awaited what they believed to be a favorable moment, and then darted out of their cover.

As fortune had it, not one of the arrows struck them.

They burst into the cabin safely, and Barney and Pomp cheered.

"Shure, Mister Frank," cried the Celt, "we have just paralyzed the omadhauns! They don't dare to show their heads above the ice, sor."

"Golly, it am lots ob fun!" grinned Pomp. "Jes' yo' watch fo' de nex' one."

"Well, if this explosion does what it ought to, they wont trouble us much longer anyway," said Frank.

He quickly connected the wire with the dynamos.

Then all awaited the shock.

It came a moment later.

There was a muffled roar, the Cutter trembled, and the air was filled with particles of flying ice.

Then all rushed forward to the pilot-house window and looked out.

The ice barrier was entirely removed from the Cutter. A part of her dasher was jammed, but this was not serious.

The crew of the Cutter cheered wildly. Frank quickly sprang to the steering wheel and pressed the motor lever.

The Cutter glided out of her awkward position, and started away across the snowy waste.

There was no use of battling with the Esquimaux further now.

A better and a safer way was to go off and leave them. They could not keep in sight of the Cutter with the sledges.

So as the Cutter glided out of her cramped position, Frank put on all speed.

A yell went up from the natives. It was answered by Barney and Pomp, who took a farewell shot at the foe.

Down the valley glided the Cutter. Soon the locality which had nearly witnessed their ruin was left far behind.

On and on went the Cutter.

Mile after mile sped by. Still to the northward the course was held.

Pomp prepared a rattling good meal for the famished travelers. After this the spirits of all arose.

"I tell you, we are bound to succeed!" cried the colonel.

"Barring serious accidents we will," declared Frank, confidently.

"Begorra, it'll be a proud day when we set foot on the North Pole!" cried Barney.

"I don't see how you's gwine to set yo' foot on de pole, chile," said Pomp, solemnly.

"What's that ye say, ye black misfit!" cried Barney. "Don't yez insult a gintleman, sor."

"A gen'leman!" sniffed Pomp. "If yo' am elected to dat offis, wha' am all de odder gen'lemen gwine to do? Dey got to git out, I reckon!"

"Git out, yez ape!" grunted Barney, making a biff at Pomp, and thus the two jokers went on jollyng each other.

And all the while the Cutter kept forging on her way to the north.

"I am in hopes we shall find the great Arctic Sea frozen," declared Frank. "If so, we will reach the Pole in quick time."

"Do you mean the sea contiguous to the Pole?" asked the colonel.

"Yes."

"Why, I thought that was always open."

"I do not believe it, and I will give you my reasons why."

CHAPTER VI.

THE ICE-BOUND SHIP.

Frank drew a notebook from his pocket. He quickly referred to memoranda therein contained.

"Here is one explorer," he said, "who penetrated to the northern limit of the icy floes. He swears that he came to an open sea—a mighty Polar ocean."

"That is right," agreed the colonel. "So I have always been led to believe."

"But here are others who have penetrated to the same spot, and swear that no open sea there existed."

"That is queer."

"Yet it is true."

"It hardly seems as if any of those explorers would lie."

"Nor are they falsifying," declared Frank. "That is not the idea at all. They are all of them right."

"What do you mean?"

The colonel looked puzzled.

"That is easy enough to understand. Both are right. The season the first explorer reached the open Polar sea was probably a mild one, and it was undoubtedly open. The next season the sea was probably closed. So all were right."

"I see," said the colonel, readily. "The seasons vary, even as in our part of the world."

"Exactly."

"Well, then, I certainly hope that we will find the sea closed and frozen over solid."

"If we do," said Frank, hopefully, "it will be a quick and glorious run to the Pole."

Here the subject dropped. Some time later an incident occurred, however, which added to the excitement of the trip.

Suddenly Barney gave the alarm.

"Shure, Mister Frank, cum on deck!" he cried.

All rushed up to find the Celt in a state of deepest excitement. He pointed to a distant ice floe.

"Look there, wud yez!" he shouted. "Shure, it's a ship!"

"A ship!"

This was true.

There in the ice was a large ship of clipper build, and encased from keel to masthead in a coating of ice.

Yards, sails and all were thus enveloped, making it look like a craft of purest crystal.

It was a beautiful spectacle.

The travelers gazed for a time spellbound. Then Frank cried:

"Change course, Barney! We must pay her a visit."

"All roight, sor."

The Celt with alacrity obeyed. The Cutter stood down for the ice-bound ship. It was seen that she was badly nipped.

Her hull was badly squeezed. She would never return to her native port.

That she was a whaler and had been carried into these wilds by adverse currents was beyond doubt.

But what of her crew.

Not one of them could be seen; her decks were deserted; no smoke issued from her furnace pipes.

Were they all dead?

It was a frightful thought to the Arctic travelers, and yet the conviction was upon them that this was true.

But what had been the means of their death? Had they perished of starvation? Had their supplies failed them?

And yet the explorers could hardly believe this true.

There was good hunting, and the game of the region was sufficient to ward off starvation.

Perhaps disease, perhaps terrible homesickness and despair had caused their deaths. But the truth would soon be known.

The Cutter pushed forward at full speed.

She could not cross the ice floes, however, and the explorers were obliged to walk a distance of possibly a hundred yards.

But they reached the ship's side without incident and clambered over the rail.

There was now no doubt in the minds of all that the crew of the nipped ship were long since dead.

No sign of life was visible anywhere. All was the silence and somber aspect of the tomb.

The explorers felt this forcibly as they stood upon the deck.

For a moment they hesitated ere venturing to open the cabin door.

Then Frank pressed upon it. It required all his might to open it.

The stairs leading down into the cabin were yet bright and clean. Frank led the way.

The cabin was as the cabin of any ordinary vessel bound for northern seas. But the furnishings claimed the attention of the explorers only for an instant.

Then a great cry of horror burst from all.

At the table sat a man, or rather the shriveled remains of one. His head was bowed low upon his breast.

In one skeleton hand was a revolver pointed across the table.

Upon the opposite side of the table, upon the floor, lay the form of another man. In his hand also was a revolver.

But the most gruesome discovery was yet to come.

At the head of the table was a small divan. Upon this lay the form of a female.

Rich and costly were the robes which enshrouded her skeleton form.

That she had been a woman of great beauty and high birth was certain. Diamonds and opals gleamed in her trailing hair.

Upon the table lay the heavy log book of the ship. Frank turned its pages.

The name of the ship was upon the log, the Petrel, and her captain was Abram Moss, of New Bedford, U. S. A.

Then the record of the fate of the crew was found.

While in high latitudes, near the coast of Greenland, the crew was stricken with a strange and baffling disease, not unlike the scurvy and much like leprosy.

They could not be saved, and one and all succumbed with a high fever, and were buried at sea.

The captain was the last to die, and the only survivors were Clarence Rothsay, a wealthy Englishman, and his wife Lucia, and a dashing young American, Hugh Montclair.

This was the tragic story of the good ship Petrel's fate.

The explorers regarded the affair as a terrible incongruous thing, and were not inclined to pursue their inspection of the ship further.

"Come away!" said Col. Heeley. "Ugh! It gives me a chill. I can't stay in this cabin a moment longer."

"Begorra, I'm wid yez!" cried Barney. "Shure, it's loike being in a tomb."

"I'll admit it is unpleasant," said Frank. "Well, we'll leave the dead people here and allow the ship to remain their perpetual tomb."

"Let us go," said the colonel.

It was folly to think of ever reclaiming the ship. Her timbers were too badly crushed.

There she must remain for an indefinite length of time, perhaps forever.

The winds of a century might whistle through the tops of the big vessel, for wood was slow to decay in those latitudes.

Nothing better could be done, therefore, than to leave the Petrel and her ghastly freight where it was.

Perhaps some warmer season than usual might relax the icy grip in which she was held.

In that case she would go to the bottom of the Arctic and find an eternal resting place.

Returning to the Cutter, the party found to their great joy that Pomp had a steaming meal ready for them.

They were glad to partake, and then turned in for a good sound sleep. Some hours later the Cutter resumed her journey.

For several days past the display of Aurora Borealis had been something gorgeous.

Heeley, who was quite a weather prophet, predicted that rough weather was near at hand.

Indeed, he seemed to have hit upon the truth, for now the air grew nipping and keen, and the sky assumed a peculiar haze indicative certainly of snow.

That a storm was near at hand was certain. Already a few scurrying flakes were in the air.

And the cold was something frightful.

It required the fur suits of the explorers and the electric heating apparatus of the Cutter's cabin to keep from freezing.

"This refutes plainly the old axiom that it is ever too cold to snow," declared the colonel. "Nothing could be colder, and yet the snow is coming."

"I think we had better prepare for it," said Frank.

"So do I."

"Begorra, does it snow ivery toime as deep as the snow is now?" asked Barney, somewhat ambiguously.

"Snow!" exclaimed Col. Heeley. "Why, ten feet is an ordinary fall. We will do well to get upon some high point, and wait there."

"You are right," agreed Frank.

So the Cutter was brought to a halt upon a high mound of ice.

Here preparations were made to wait for the storm to pass. Very soon it began to come on.

Great whirling banks of the feathery substance now came sifting through the rarefied atmosphere.

In a short while a literal blizzard was in progress.

All was the darkness of Egypt, which even the electric lights of the Cutter could hardly penetrate.

CHAPTER VII.

BURIED IN SNOW—THE FROZEN SEA.

The Electric Cutter had run into a genuine Arctic storm.

But the explorers could do no better than make the best of it. They made themselves cozy in the cabin.

As the storm increased the temperature began to rise, so that it was not quite so cold.

The cold wave, driven before the storm, had evidently passed.

Yet it was rather dreary waiting for the storm to pass. Various means were employed to dispel ennui.

Games were played, songs were sung, and finally all re-

tired to sleep. And while they slept a white winding sheet was being folded about them.

For forty-eight hours the storm raged. Snow was over the deck of the Cutter, and nothing could be seen outside.

Then it abated, and finally Frank concluded that it must have passed, as it seemed a bit lighter in the cabin.

He went to the window and tried to look out. A solid bank of snow was against it. A startled thought came to him.

"Mercy!" he gasped. "We've got buried in the stuff, I think."

Col. Heeley exchanged glances with Frank.

"I'll wager we are."

"But we have air."

"That may be. The snow is very light and would not exclude that. But do you not feel a certain closeness?"

"I must admit that I do!" agreed Frank. "Let us investigate."

The young inventor at once went into the pilot-house.

Snow obscured the windows on all sides. He opened the door to go out upon the deck.

To his surprise he saw only a great bank of the feathery stuff, some of which fell into the pilot-house.

"My soul!" he gasped; "we are indeed buried in the snow!"

"So I thought!" cried the colonel. "Now we must find a way out of it!"

Frank called to Barney and Pomp, who came with shovels.

They at once began work at tunneling the mighty snow bank.

They worked valorously.

Straight into the snow bank for a great distance they dug.

Then they dared go no further for fear that it would cave in and engulf them. It was a thrilling situation.

They were completely under the snow. How long they would have to remain in this predicament it was not easy to guess.

It might be for months.

Yet how to extricate themselves was a puzzle.

It was evident that the snow was everywhere of a uniform depth. To tunnel ahead then was folly.

"Try an upward shaft!" cried Frank.

This was done.

The result was that after digging upward for four or five feet light and air were admitted.

Barney climbed up and took a look about.

When he came down he shrugged his broad shoulders and growled:

"Begorra, it's a bad fix we're in. Shure it's snow ivery-where as far as yez can see, and it's cowlder than blazes up there!"

The explorers were at a complete loss what to do.

Here was certainly a puzzler. What was to be done?

To attempt to dig out of the snow seemed absurd. It would apparently take months.

Frank in turn climbed up through the shaft and took a view of the situation. He saw that Barney was right.

He returned to the cabin and spent some time in careful thought. Some method must be devised to extricate the Cutter from its position.

Just how to do it was the question. Frank was one of the kind that when once he essayed a problem he never relinquished it until it was solved.

So he labored away at it. And while thus engaged fortunately Nature came to his aid.

Some hours later Barney made a thrilling report.

"Shure, sor, the snow is not as deep as it was," he declared. "It seems to be falling, sor."

"It does?" exclaimed Frank.

"Yis, sor."

"Then the temperature is rising."

"Faith, I think it is, sor. The snow is going down any-way, sor."

"Thank heaven for that!" exclaimed Frank.

"It is very easily explained after all!" cried the colonel, eagerly. "The snow is so very light, you see, that a change in temperature must pack it some."

"How much has it fallen?"

"I should think a foot."

Frank went into the pilot-house. He was overjoyed to see that the snow had settled just below the top of the window.

He could look out and see the snowy plain beyond.

This decided him upon action.

"We must dig our way out!" he declared. "Bring out the shovels."

This was done and all went to work. In a little while they had dug a deep pit all about the stern propeller, and cleared the cogwheels of the snow, which clogged them.

It was while thus engaged that an idea occurred to Frank.

He went into the cabin and started the machinery. It worked heavily at first, but with increased force as they got clear of the clogging snow.

The action of the swiftly revolving blades quickly cleared a large space about.

Then Frank proceeded to rig a device made of several of the shovels and connected it with the propelling rod.

They were made to revolve like lightning, the same as the propeller, and could be transported anywhere about the Cutter.

Holding the long bar upon which revolved the shovels, Barney and Pomp thus had an electric snow shovel which cleared more snow in one minute of action than could have been removed by hand in ten.

The electric snow shovel was at once a booming success.

With enthusiasm the party worked upon the snow bank.

The result was that before the day closed the Cutter was entirely free of snow, and an upward path was partly constructed, by which it would be enabled to glide to the surface.

As luck had it that night there was a powerful freeze, and a crust capable of bearing any weight was formed.

The next morning the path was completed with the use of ice picks, and then the Cutter was started ahead.

She easily ran out of her imprisonment and out upon the frozen crust. The explorers took a farewell look at the deep hole where they had been buried.

Then with a cheer all clambered aboard, and the Cutter once more went on her way.

Straight to the north she kept.

The queer actions of the electric needle now convinced Frank that they were somewhere near the magnetic region.

Suddenly there burst into view one morning a most thrilling spectacle.

As far as the eye could reach was visible one smooth, level shining field of ice. Frank gave a shout:

"The frozen sea!"

The cry was taken up by the others, and great was the excitement. At last the much-talked of point had been reached.

And here a halt was called.

Frank knew that it would be a long run across the mighty expanse, and there were some preparations to make.

The machinery required some repairing, and there was some other overhauling which had best be done now.

"Well, we are now easily within reach of the famous North Pole!" cried Col. Heeley, joyfully.

"Yes," agreed Frank, "but we may yet find a barrier."

"How so?"

"Why, perhaps the sea may not be frozen all the way to the pole. If it is not we can never reach there."

The colonel looked dubious.

"I never thought of that!" he declared. "Well, we won't have it that way anyhow."

"We have at least reached the highest point ever before reached by man," said Frank with unction.

"That is something."

"Yes."

"Well, I have confidence that we will make the pole."

"I certainly hope we will."

Barney and Pomp set busily to work with Frank, cleaning up the machinery. It was not long before they had made a thorough job of it.

Then the Cutter was announced all in readiness for the long run.

Frank had estimated the distance at less than five hundred miles.

With a clear course over the frozen sea they should make it easily in less than a week.

"What do you suppose we will find there?" asked Col. Heeley, with the eager interest of a boy.

"No doubt land," declared Frank.

"Do you believe it?"

"I do!"

"An Arctic or rather Polar Continent?"

"Exactly."

"Well, I hope we will," said the colonel, briskly. "That will be something to tell about when we get home."

"We will have enough to tell about," said Frank, confidently. "There is more ahead of us than we have yet encountered."

The Cutter now sped out upon the ice. Across the frozen sea she raced like a bird.

The ice glistened in places like a mirror. There were air holes and crevices, but these were easily avoided.

Walrus and seals were disporting themselves about these openings, but they incontinently fled at sight of the Cutter.

It was gay sailing over the ice-frozen fields. Along swiftly raced the Cutter.

Her propeller blades clicked upon the hard surface and made tremendous speed. The only drawback was the cold.

This was something awful.

In fact, the explorers were not safe on the deck for a moment, for the blast was sufficient to extinguish life.

"Whew!" exclaimed the colonel as he came in from the pilot-house blue and cold. "I never heard of such frightful cold in my life. It must be eighty below zero out there."

"No doubt it is close to it," agreed Frank. "If Barney don't freeze to that wheel he'll be lucky."

The ice cutter's sail had been set, and this helped to give her speed. She fled across the glittering waste like a thing of life.

And the faster she went the more intense the cold became.

Day after day passed, and Frank kept strict account of the miles covered.

"We are two hundred miles from the Polar continent, if such exists," he said one fine morning.

Then a cry came from Pomp, who had relieved Barney at the wheel.

"Marse Frank!" he cried. "Come quick! Dere am land ahead!"

"Land!"

The cry went from lip to lip. All at once rushed pell-mell into the pilot-house.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE POLAR CONTINENT.

Pomp's declaration was true.

There was land ahead; at least if that low lying black line on the horizon was to be believed.

Frank and the colonel studied it closely with a glass.

Every moment it became plainer to all as the cutter raced on.

"It is land!" cried Frank, at last; "there is no doubt of it!"

"The Polar Continent?"

"Yes!"

"It is no myth."

The interest of the explorers was hardly to be expressed in words.

They could not fly fast enough toward the Polar continent. Extra speed was put on.

All sorts of conjectures were made.

"What sort of a country do you suppose it is?" cried the colonel.

"Perhaps a veritable Eden," said Frank, with a laugh, "but more likely a desolate rocky isle."

"With a frigidity of frightful sort. Too cold for snow."

"Possibly."

"Yet you are, of course, aware that there are many scientists who believe faithfully that the Polar continent is a warm and equable clime."

"It may be so."

"Let us hope so, anyway."

"So I say."

But now all noted an appreciable change in the air. The intense cold was rapidly growing more moderate.

More of the continent could now be seen, and to the surprise of all what seemed like a mighty distant column of smoke was rising.

"Smoke!" exclaimed the colonel. "What can that mean? Is the continent inhabited?"

"Golly," cried Pomp. "Jes' like's not we am goin' to be like Columbus an' fin' out a new race ob people."

"No," said Frank, with conviction. "It is more likely a volcano!"

"You've hit it!" cried the colonel. "Why should there not be volcanoes at the North Pole as well as at the South?"

"There probably are."

The Cutter now drew nearer to the Polar Continent.

All on board were consumed with curiosity to get a nearer view of the wonderful new land.

Its shores were ice-bound and snow-clad like all of the Arctic country they had left below the frozen sea.

But the mighty range of volcanic mountains far beyond the coast were entirely devoid of snow.

Indeed, with a glass, Frank easily detected green verdure upon their slopes.

"A warm and fertile region contiguous to the Pole!" he cried. "That has been the theory of every scientist, and we have now found the confirmation."

Truly it was a great discovery. As the explorers reflected upon it they were certainly pardonable for a bit of excitement.

The question now arose:

Was the Polar Continent inhabited?

Of course this could not be answered yet. Yet it was not impossible, nor at all improbable.

Esquimaux lived right at the verge of the frozen sea, and might have crossed it.

Certainly they camped upon its bosom in the hunt for walrus and seal.

Therefore it was not at all unlikely that some of them might have found their way across to the Polar Continent.

The Cutter some hours later ran close to the ice-bound shores of the new land.

A good place was found to run ashore, and a steep bank was scaled with some difficulty.

Then the Cutter ran across a rolling country upon the surface of the snow for some fifty miles.

But the further inland they penetrated the less intense became the cold.

The volcanoes could be seen now in seeming close proximity. The snow became now very thin and indeed slushy.

At length it became evident that the Cutter could not safely proceed further. A halt was made.

This was at the base of a high fir-clad ridge of land. The summit of this was entirely divested of snow.

Hastily Frank caused things to be made ship-shape abroad the Cutter. Then he said:

"Now let us take a look at the region beyond that rise of land!"

All left the Cutter and climbed the ridge. They looked down upon a strange scene beyond.

A deep valley trended downward between mighty mountain ranges. Six of the highest peaks had active craters.

The valley looked green and fertile, and the waves of air which came up from it were warm.

"An oasis in the desert of ice!" cried Col. Heeley, rapturously.

This expressed the matter exactly.

And the explorers gazed upon the beautiful green grass and budding trees with inexpressible pleasure.

It was a relief to their eyes, overtaxed with the deadly and eternal white through which they had been journeying so long.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Frank at last. "No doubt we are the first of our race who have been permitted to gaze upon this wonderful scene!"

"No doubt," agreed Col. Heeley.

"Can you see any signs of human habitation?"

"Golly, Marse Frank, wha' am dat?" cried Pomp, excitedly.

The darky pointed to a deep crevice in the side of one of the volcanic mountains.

Frank gave a violent start.

"Great heavens!" he ejaculated. "It is a hut of stone!"

There was no disputing the fact.

There, deep in the secluded crevice, was the uncouth and primitive structure.

Smoke also issued from a crevice in the roof.

"It is a human habitation!" cried Col. Heeley. "That point is settled beyond all doubt."

The Polar Continent was inhabited.

But by what sort of a race? Were they a tribe of Esquimaux, or a different race entirely, and peculiar to the warmer clime?

This question was quickly answered.

Suddenly from the hut there emerged the form of a man.

He was a literal giant in stature and frame. He seemed fully seven feet tall, and was clad in a semi-barbaric costume of skins.

His muscles were like those supposed to have been possessed by aboriginal man, and long yellow hair fell to his waist.

He did not appear to see the explorers, and moved away down the valley, swinging a huge club.

Presently a child with flaxen hair and white skin ran out, and then in the doorway appeared a plain looking woman, fit companion of the man.

"Upon my word!" said Frank, finally, "if I did not know better I should believe them descendants of the ancient

Norsemen, who once inhabited the shores of the North Sea."

"Perhaps they are a branch of that people," declared Heeley.

"But how could they come here?"

"I don't know. They were great explorers; with their ships the ancient Vikings went everywhere, you know. They settled Iceland, and tried to settle America."

"That sounds logical," agreed Frank. "I am anxious for a close acquaintance. I wonder if they are hostile?"

"We will soon find out if we go down there," declared the colonel.

But the attention of all was claimed at this moment by a startling sound.

It was a distant, strange medley of yells, and turning, all saw coming along the ridge toward them four as savage looking beings as ever the eye rested upon.

That they were of the same clan as the one yellow-haired fellow they had seen was certain.

Their appearance was hostile in the extreme. They advanced, swinging their axes fiercely and yelling madly.

"Wha' am we gwine to do, Marse Frank?" cried Pomp.

"Wait here!" said Frank.

He saw that the numbers were even, and felt willing to take the chances.

"But—it looks as if they meant to attack us!" said the colonel.

"Are we not good for them?" asked Frank.

"We ought to be. But shall we fire?"

"Not yet!" replied the young inventor. "I want to parley."

Frank was fairly versed in the Scandinavian tongue, and now he stepped forward and shouted, boldly:

"Hold! Stand where you are!"

He spoke as plainly in Scandinavian as he could. To his relief he saw that the Arctic natives appeared to understand him.

They came to a halt.

Then one of them, who appeared to be the best qualified as a spokesman, came forward, saying, with a slight variation of the dialect as Frank knew it:

"Who are you, strangers? What do you want in the land of Eric the Bold?"

"You are Norsemen!" replied Frank. "We are from a far land called America. We would be friends, and give you greeting."

"Eric knows no friends but his own people!" replied the chieftain, haughtily.

"Let us at least not war upon each other then," said Frank. "We do not seek your lives!"

"We will give truce!" replied Eric the Bold, as he strode nearer; "truly you are a strange people. We have never seen you before."

"No," replied Frank. "Without doubt we are the first of our race to visit this wonderful region."

"Is your land ruled by a powerful king?"

"Ay, that it is!" replied Frank, impressively. "Our people are many, and we sail all seas in the world with our ships. We fight not with axes as you do. See!"

Frank raised his revolver and fired at a hawk in the air above.

The Polar natives shrank back in amazement at the report, and were plainly astonished to see the hawk come fluttering down.

Eric the Bold came forward in amazement to examine the pistol.

Frank explained it to him as best he could. The chief listened intently.

"We are friends," he said, finally. "We will not fight. Come to our city; you are welcome. Eric rules and you are safe."

Frank hesitated a moment.

"What say you, Heeley?" he asked.

"All right," replied the colonel.

"We will go. Barney and Pomp," he said, "you will go back to the Cutter and wait for our return."

Without a word Pomp and Barney obeyed. Then Eric caught sight of the Snow Cutter.

Abruptly he asked its nature. Frank explained it to him as best he could.

The chief of the Norsemen listened most attentively. Then Frank led him down to the Cutter and described it to him.

Eric was delighted as well as astonished. He could hardly be induced to leave the Cutter.

"I will give my kingdom for that," he said, earnestly. "It is my desire; I must have one like it."

Frank saw a dangerous light in the chief's eyes and was forewarned.

CHAPTER IX.

AT THE NORSE VILLAGE.

Eric the Bold now proposed that the party visit his village.

So Frank and the colonel accepted the invitation, and, leaving the Cutter in the care of Barney and Pomp, they followed the lead of the giant Norsemen.

But they had found it advisable and necessary to doff a part of their fur garments before starting.

They also armed themselves well, and Frank carried a small storage battery in his pocket.

Eric the Bold led the way.

Frank and the colonel chatted with him socially as they went on.

In this manner they learned very many important and desirable things.

"Have you any records of your ancestors?" asked Frank; "do you really believe that this has always been your native land?"

The Norse chief shook his head.

"No," he replied. "We come from far to the south. Our Sagas will sing you songs of the Red King, and the mighty deeds of Oswald and the old Vikings. We have nothing in common with this land."

"So I thought," cried Frank, eagerly. "Have you any traditions as to how your people came here?"

"That we have," replied Eric. "Many hundred years ago Olof the Daring left his native land with six hundred men and women in ships.

"He sailed thousands of leagues through icebound seas. In vain his people tried to get him to turn back. He would not listen, and it was his fate.

"He reached this land, and then there came awful ice storms. Not since then has the ice barrier to the south been clear. They were not able to return, and here they made their homes. We are the descendants of Olof and his band."

"How like a romance!" cried the colonel, excitedly. "Then, Sir Eric, your people are numerous?"

"They have multiplied some," replied Eric, "but two hundred years ago they divided and my ancestors occupied this valley with those loyal to him, and Olof the Cruel, descendant of old Olof, now holds a region far beyond. They are strong and equal in numbers to us, some three thousand warriors. But they make war upon us and would crush us but for the impenetrable walls of our valley."

"A people divided against each other!" exclaimed Frank. "Is not that all in accordance with tradition?"

Eric's eyes flashed with a warrior's light, and he cried in a swelling voice:

"The day will come when Eric will sit upon the bones of his foe. Olof the Cruel must die!"

After this there was silence for some time.

Down into the valley the party strode rapidly. Finally Frank was moved to ask:

"Eric, noble sir. May I ask, is ever the sea to the south clear of ice?"

"Aye!" replied the Norse chief. "It is seldom frozen over as now!"

"How long think you will it remain frozen?"

"Until the warm winds from the South come. Then we will sail in our galleys upon its bosom, and our young men will fish in its depths."

What was upon Frank's mind was the question as to whether the party would be able to get back to the Arctic Circle or not before the frozen sea should break up.

He had no desire to spend an indefinite time upon the Polar Continent.

It might be a lifetime before the sea would freeze up again so that they might make their return.

He was, therefore, resolved not to tarry too long in the place.

But he reckoned that there would be time enough to spend a few days in exploration in the Polar Valley.

To the north was a mighty high-walled pass between gigantic volcanoes.

In this pass, partly in the valley, was the city of Norsemen. At its southern border there rolled the shimmering waters of a lake.

The two Yankee explorers gazed upon the scene with interest.

They saw that the Norse City consisted of rude buildings of stone, which were all within a high walled inclosure.

This was adorned with battlements and parapets after the olden style. Smoke rose from the place, and the flash of fire in forges was seen, evidence that there was industry among this relic of a savage race, long ago extinct in Europe.

The valley beyond was also diversified with vineyards and farms, where the rude forms of husbandry were practiced.

Goats and a few sheep were seen grazing on the hillsides—no doubt descended from animals originally brought from Norseland many centuries ago.

Frank and the colonel took all this in with deepest interest. Indeed, it was a wonderful scene.

"Yonder is the Pass of Thar," declared Eric, pointing to the mighty cleft in which nestled the town. "Beyond is the land of Olof the Cruel. We have walled the pass, and it is defended by a hundred warriors. We once killed six hundred of Olof's men, who were trying to force the pass, while we lost but a handful ourselves. It is our safeguard."

"You are fortunate," declared Frank. "But is there no other point of attack?"

"Not a safe one," replied Eric.

They now approached the Norse city rapidly. Some of Eric's followers had run on ahead to warn the citizens of his coming.

It was a scene of excitement which now ensued.

The entire populace seemed aroused and streamed out into the valley from the city gates.

They thronged about the newcomers, men, women and children. But Eric's presence protected them.

Into the city they were escorted.

Eric took them to his house and gave them wine, which was pressed in the Arctic valley, and also meat.

Then he led them to the wall which blocked the Pass of Thar.

The wall was of solid masonry, full fifty feet high.

It was truly impassable, and an effectual obstacle to the attacks of a foe such as Olof the Cruel.

Of course modern engines of warfare would easily have battered it down.

Truly Eric the Bold was a most hospitable ruler, and his distinguished visitors were well entertained.

Eric insisted that they should not return to the Cutter that night, and they slept in Norse beds for the first time.

These were made of the skins of the bear suspended from the ground like a hammock.

They were primitive, but exceedingly comfortable, and our friends could not find fault.

The non-return of the two explorers to the Cutter that night resulted in a complication which we shall detail in another chapter.

After the morning meal in Eric's palace was over, the Norse ruler, in honor of his guests, decreed a holiday.

By his direction also a programme of field sports was arranged, of which his guests were to be witnesses.

"That will certainly be interesting," declared the colonel. "I shall enjoy witnessing such a thing."

"Just think!" exclaimed Frank. "We are to see these sports given just as they were centuries ago in the land of the Vikings!"

It was indeed an exciting reflection.

Outside the city wall was a green plot upon which the sports were usually held.

Here the participants gathered.

Nearly stripped, they were the most perfect physical type of men the young inventor thought that he had ever seen.

The contour of their bodies, the swelling muscles and full chests, were evidence of Samson-like powers.

It was to be indeed a treat for the explorers.

The entire populace of the Norse city turned out to see the event.

Eric the Bold occupied the seat of honor, and Frank and the colonel sat beside him.

First there came trials of skill at wrestling. It was an exhibition Titan-like in its details.

The giant Norsemen wrestled as even Hercules and Atreus of old might have done.

One powerful warrior met and vanquished all comers. He was declared the champion and accorded the winner's prize.

Then followed swiftly other games and trials of muscular power and skill.

There were foot races, leaping matches and boxing contests. Also duels with short sword and shield or with battle axes.

Then the lifting of heavy weights followed, and many other feats of strength. Finally Eric stepped down and threw off his royal mantle.

"Come forth, Erl, thou king of wrestlers," he cried. "Eric challenges thee!"

A great murmur went up from the throng. The Norse chief had challenged the wrestling champion.

Of course he came forward in response. To Frank and the colonel it looked presumptuous in Eric to challenge Erl the Giant.

Preparations were made for the struggle. A ring was made and Eric stepped into it. He beckoned to Erl, who advanced and met him.

Then the two men grappled.

It was now seen that Erl was not physically the superior of Eric, though so much larger.

The Norse chief was a wonderfully well built man.

In vain the giant Erl strove to overcome him. Eric clung to his grip with great persistency.

It was his forte to stand upon the defensive and tire his antagonist. For a long while they wrestled there.

And before long it became apparent that Eric was succeeding in his purpose.

Erl began to wax very tired, and of a sudden the Norse chief put all his strength into the effort to throw the famous wrestler.

The muscles of the two powerful men could be heard to actually crack as they bent to their work.

But slowly though surely Erl was obliged to succumb.

Like a mighty monarch of the forest he reeled, tottered, and then went down with a crash.

Eric had won.

The Norse people cheered their chief madly. Frank and the colonel also applauded.

"That was well done!" cried Frank, as Eric returned, panting and bathed in perspiration. "You have strength, sirrah, but not the secret of power which I have."

The Norse chief regarded Frank with amazement.

"You!" he gasped. "You are only a stripling. Your muscles are like those of a woman."

"That may be," said Frank, as he winked at Heeley, "but I'll wager my head against yours that with the palm of my hand I can knock you senseless."

Eric glanced at Frank's womanlike hands and then laughed uproariously.

He swelled his chest until it bulged out many inches. Striking it until it resounded like a heavy drum, he cried:

"I'll make the wager. Moreover, I'll present thee with one hundred measures of wine if you can even make me stagger. Strike the hardest blow you can."

"I'm afraid you'll get into trouble, Frank," said the colonel, in a whisper. "These people will never see you strike their chief."

But Frank said:

"I will look out for that," then to Eric he said: "Assure your people that it is all right."

Eric turned and spoke to his people. Then, with a mocking light in his eyes, he presented himself before Frank.

"Strike!" he declared, baring his breast. "I feel thy blow no more than the sting of a gnat."

In the center of Frank's gloved hand was a small metal disk. It connected with a wire which ran up his coat-sleeve.

The young inventor stepped forward, and with the open palm of his gloved hand smote Eric full and fair upon the breast.

The Norse chief turned a complete back somersault, going down as if struck by a catapult. Light danced before his vision, and for a moment he could not rise. The situation was difficult to describe.

CHAPTER X.

BARNEY A CAPTIVE.

Meanwhile, Barney and Pomp, left aboard the Cutter, had waited patiently for the return of Frank and the colonel.

As time passed and they did not return they began to feel uneasy.

The night passed and another day came.

"Begorra," muttered Barney. "I wondher if it's comin' at all they are?"

"P'r'aps dem yaller haired heathens hab done killed dem," ventured Pomp.

"Bejabers, I'll have their blood if they have!" blustered Barney.

"Huh! dat's a'right fo' yo' to blow, I'ish! I done fink yo' wouldn't be in it at all if dey was to tackle yo'!"

This maddened Barney.

"Phwat's that yez say?" he cried angrily. "Begorra, I'll take it out av yez if yez dare to insult me."

"No, yo' won't, honey!" retorted Pomp. "Yo' ain't able."

Things were ripe for a ruction between the two jokers. They were at the moment upon the forward deck of the Cutter, and it was the morning after the departure of Frank and the colonel.

Barney had made a threatening move toward Pomp when an incident arrested the attention of both.

A distant yell came to their ears. In an instant both were on the qui vive.

"Massy sakes! what am dat?" gasped Pomp.

"Begorra, mebbe it's them callin' on us fer help!" cried Barney.

The two jokers looked at each other a moment seriously. Then Barney slid over the rail.

"Wait a bit, naygur. I'll be wid yez later."

Up to the summit of the eminence Barney ran. It was a serious mistake.

For no sooner had he reached the top than from a clump of bushes a dozen savage Norsemen sprang forth.

The Celt was taken completely by surprise. He could not even make resistance.

They were upon him instantly and he was a prisoner.

Pomp on the deck of the Cutter saw all with horror. He yelled wildly to Barney.

"Hol' on, chile; I'm a-comin' to help yo'."

But Barney shouted back:

"Don't yez let ther divils git aboard the Cutter. Niver moind me!"

Pomp saw the futility of any attempt to go to Barney's rescue.

Alone as he was, he could not compete with the vast numbers. Moreover there was no snow on the ridge.

And now the Norsemen came swarming down upon the Cutter.

There was no alternative. Pomp was in a fearful state of mind.

He did not want to go off and leave his friend in such a terrible position. But there was nothing else to do.

So he sprang into the pilot-house, and started the Cutter away toward the frozen sea.

It was but a few moments before it glided out upon the vast expanse.

The Norsemen came after it in hot haste, but they could not overtake it.

At every spare moment Pomp kept up a fire on the pur-

suers with his Winchester. He was enabled thus to pick off many of the foe.

The Norsemen soon abandoned the pursuit. But they hovered about the shore waiting for the Cutter to return.

Pomp was in a fearful state of mind.

He gave Frank and the colonel up for lost now. There seemed no doubt in his mind that they had been assassinated.

It was a horrible position for the affrighted dorky.

"Wha' am dis chile gwine fo' to do?" he gasped, with horror. "Suah nuff, I'se all lef' alone in dis drefful paht ob de world."

This certainly seemed true. Pomp's wool nearly stood on end.

But he kept the Snow Cutter out of the way of the Arctic natives, and waited, still hoping that Frank and the colonel would show up.

Leaving him thus, let us follow the fortunes of Barney.

The Celt was a prisoner in the hands of the Norsemen. Had they been members of the band of Eric the Bold he would no doubt have fared differently.

The truth was, Olof the Cruel had long been waiting the opportunity to safely invade the nation of his rival Eric.

He had been unable to carry the Pass of Thar, nor could he safely cross the volcanic mountains.

But now that the sea had frozen over again he found it easy to make a detour and attack his foe from that direction.

All unsuspecting this stratagem of Olof's were the people of Eric, who were entertaining Frank and the colonel this moment far down in their valley village.

Upon the icy shore hundreds of Olof's warriors were gathered, waiting only for the word to descend into the valley and massacre the foe.

Barney, of course, was not aware of this.

He saw no difference between these Norsemen and those with whom Frank and the colonel had departed.

The Celt felt certain now that Frank and Col. Heeley were killed.

What his fate would be he did not know. His reflections were not of the pleasantest, but he was a plucky fellow, and kept up a bold front.

He was hustled away over the ridge by his savage captors.

They chattered in an unintelligible tongue, and for a time handled Barney roughly. Several times one old chief seemed disposed to brain the Celt with his war club. But another chief, with long red beard, interceded for him.

The Celt's ready wit and presence of mind did not desert him.

He realized, well enough, what a desperate predicament he was in, but it was his disposition to make the best of it.

It occurred to him that if he could enlist the interest or curiosity of his captors, he would be all right.

So he began to sing and dance furiously in the Irish fashion.

The Norse warriors regarded him with astonishment. Then they gathered about him, apparently interested.

Barney redoubled his efforts.

He indulged in comical grimaces, told side-splitting stories, though he knew his captors could not understand a word.

But his antics were comical enough to claim the attention and interest of the savage warriors at once. It is said that music hath "charms to soothe the savage breast."

Remembering this, Barney drew from his pocket a small harmonica, and began to play upon it.

He was an adept in the art, and ground out some inspiring melodies. The Norse captors seemed to forget all else in their interest.

While their companions were trying to capture the Snow Cutter, the majority of Olof's warriors were laughing uproariously at Barney's antics and enjoying his music.

The Celt had "caught on" with the savage crowd.

There was no further attempt to take his life. Instead, one of the warriors advanced and laid a hand upon his shoulder with a guttural remark. His action seemed to imply ownership, and his gestures indicated that Barney was to obey him.

The Celt ducked his head and followed him, but mentally he was studying an adroit plan of escape.

By this time the warriors who had been chasing the Cutter now gave over the attempt and returned.

Olof the Cruel, a giant warrior with long blonde curls falling to his waist, now marshaled his men and addressed them in a fervid manner.

Singing a wild, barbaric song, they began to descend into the valley.

The first sign of Eric's people was seen when the invaders suddenly came upon a little stone hut in the side of a mountain.

A flock of goats grazed at the door.

A woman was churning near by, and children were at play. The husbandman rushed from the hut as the warriors appeared.

What followed made Barney's blood boil, though he was powerless.

The warriors instantly surrounded the humble habitation. There was no show of sentiment or mercy. All were killed.

The little hut was fired, and as the flames rolled up a yell of discovery came from the valley below, and was carried from lip to lip until it reached Eric's village.

This was the way of Olof the Cruel.

"I will exterminate them all, blood and spawn!" he declared in the Norse tongue. "Olof spares no foe."

Chanting their war song, the invaders surged down on the valley.

Now they came in sight of Eric's village, and by a little green hill they were met by the first show of resistance.

A hundred of Eric's peasants, armed with hatchets of stone and clubs of wood, stood in their path.

The war cry went up and the invaders descended upon the little party of defenders like wolves.

The valor displayed by Eric's men was something remarkable.

They were really fighting to gain time, so that those in the city could prepare for the attack.

Not one of them but knew that his life must be sacrificed; but this did not at all deter them.

They fought desperately, one after another yielding up his life before such superior numbers.

Barney's Irish blood was up, and he yelled excitedly:

"Begorra, go in, little men, an' I hope yez will win! I wisht I cud help ye!"

But the Celt knew well the folly of any rash move. He was but one among the many, and his single effort would not have turned the tide.

The little band of defenders were totally annihilated, and now nothing lay between the invaders and the goal of their desires

CHAPTER XI.

THE BATTLE OF GIANTS.

As Eric the Bold went down beneath Frank Reade, Jr.'s, powerful blow, for a moment the situation, as Col. Heeley had feared, was critical.

The Norse warriors all at once misunderstood the affair and were instantly in sympathy with their chief.

With excited cries they rushed forward with weapons in hand. But Frank Reade threw up his arms.

"Back!" he shouted in the Scandinavian dialect, "I have not harmed your chief. It is only a test of strength!"

This was sufficient to hold them in check. But they assumed threatening attitudes until Eric got upon his feet.

For a moment the Norse chief was so dazed that he could not make action or speak. Then as he recovered he looked at Frank in a half resolute, half puzzled way.

He looked at his breast and felt of the spot where he had received the blow.

There was no abrasion, it was not even sore. And yet he had been knocked down with Titan-force.

Eric was puzzled. For a few moments he stood in silence. Then he experienced a crestfallen feeling.

He looked about and saw the angry attitude of his people and comprehended that phase of the situation at once.

He addressed them sternly, ordering them to fall back.

Then he turned to Frank.

"You have the strength of a god!" he said with conviction. "It is not human power!"

Frank laughed at this.

"Do you think so?" he said, coolly. "Are you satisfied?"

"If you do not get your strength from the gods, there is a trick about it," averred the Norse chief.

Frank was not prepared to deny this. But he said:

"Appearances are deceptive, Sir Eric. It is not always the large man who has the most power!"

Eric stood irresolute a moment. Then he advanced and again bared his breast.

"Strike again!" he said. "Wait!"

He spoke a few words to his men. Two of them, stout fellows, advanced.

By their chief's orders they stood behind him, and with their hands upon his shoulders braced him.

Then Eric said to the young inventor:

"Strike again! If you prevail against us all I shall believe you endowed of the gods."

Frank smiled and replied:

"I can drive you clean through your men. Think well of it, chief. This time it may hurt you."

"As you value my friendship, strike!" said Eric, sternly.

Frank raised his gloved hand, in which was the disc, and again smote the Norse chief full and fair upon the naked breast.

Of course the shock extended even to the arms of the two giants bracing their chief. All three went down in a heap.

Eric pulled himself together and arose. Then he advanced and held out one hand to Frank.

"You are favored of the gods!" he said. "Eric pays you homage. You are a greater chief than he!"

Col. Heeley had been somewhat perturbed through the whole affair, but now he felt better.

He could not help a smile at the result of Frank's ruse.

Had the Norsemen known the truth their emotions would have been vastly different.

From that moment the two visitors were more than welcome in the Norse settlement. They were revered as favored of Thar.

But while all this had been going on an incident of the most thrilling sort had been culminating elsewhere.

The band of Olof the Cruel had invaded the valley and were advancing upon the town. The alarm came like a thunderclap.

In an instant it spread over the entire town and created a tremendous furore.

The Norse people were thrown into a state of terrible excitement.

Women and children flocked into the town and sought refuge behind its walls.

Armed men rushed to close the gates and barricade them, and make other preparations to resist the foe.

It was the first time that Olof's men had ever gained the valley.

They were known to be superior in numbers and in knowledge of warfare. Eric was much wrought up over the situation.

Col. Heeley and Frank now found themselves in rather a serious position.

It looked as if they would be obliged to stay in the city until after the battle was over.

To attempt to return to the Cutter would be risky indeed. Indeed it would be almost certainly fatal.

"Well, Frank!" cried the colonel, "I think we are in for it!"

"That's so."

"It looks as if we would be obliged to help Eric out."

"So it does! I am afraid, though, it will be a hard fight. I only wish we could reach the Cutter and get some of these electric bombs."

"With them we could beat Olof off easily."

"Sure! but we have not got them."

The distant war cries of the invaders could now be heard.

Eric's men were in their places upon the wall of the town. With javelins and arrows and battle clubs, all primitive weapons, they awaited the coming of the foe.

Eric came to Frank with stern but troubled face, and said:

"My brother, Eric would gladly help you to get out of this valley now if it was only in his power. But I fear that I cannot do it. But we will defend you to the last from Olof's men!"

"Ah, but we are going to take sides with you!" declared Frank. "We shall do all we can to help you!"

An eager light shone in Eric's eyes.

"Do you mean that?" he asked.

"Yes!"

"I shall tell my men. It will be inspiration to them!"

Frank and the colonel had about fifty cartridges each for their Winchesters. After these were gone they had their revolvers, with as much more ammunition.

"If we can get a position where we can make every shot count," declared Frank, "if their numbers are not too great, colonel, we will whip them!"

"We'll try it!" said the colonel, for whom this was not the first battle field.

The invaders were now in sight. A formidable looking array they made as they came surging on to the attack.

Olof the Cruel led them. But when an eminence was reached within hailing distance of the town a halt was called.

Eric went out upon the wall and a parley was opened.

"Why comes my brother in this array into our peaceful valley?" asked Eric, in a mild tone. "Why should he seek our lives?"

"The traditions of our fathers must be fulfilled," retorted Olof. "For centuries our people have tried to gain the Pass of Thar, but you have beat us back. There must be bloodshed between us, and we cannot rest until the blood of our forefathers is avenged."

"Then you will have war?"

"Why talk of peace? Are we not foes by heritage and by nature? One or the other of us must die. If you are cowards, surrender; if not, we must attack."

"How is it?" asked Col. Heeley. "Will they compromise?"

But Frank shook his head.

"No," he said. "I have no faith that they will. It must be a battle!"

Frank and the colonel had selected a housetop as their place of vantage. Here they could see every detail of the conflict.

Here they kept their ammunition ready to open fire when the right moment should come.

It was of no use to attempt to make peace with Olof.

He was ripe for a battle, and a battle it must be. At once his men advanced to the attack.

They swarmed forward like wolves, rushing upon the city walls with the evident determination to carry all before them.

But Eric's men met them with equal determination and even desperation.

The air was filled with flying arrows and javelins. The invaders scaled the city wall and met their foes face to face.

Frank saw at a glance that the invaders were better disciplined in war than Eric's men.

They fought like demons. They carried all before them, and it was likely that the peaceful people of Eric would have been swept out of existence that day but for a certain intervention.

Frank and the colonel, upon the housetop, had been far

from idle. At every point, at critical moments, they used their rifles.

Hardly a shot missed. Either the recipient of the aim was killed or wounded. This unseen power, dealing death in their midst so rapidly, surprised the invaders.

"Give it to them!" cried Frank. "I think they are beginning to weaken."

"Aye!" cried the colonel. "Let us fire at the centre for awhile, and help Eric to break it."

Man after man dropped from the centre of Olof's line. The men of Eric saw their opportunity and were pressing forward.

Olof's men had now been driven from the wall. The ground was covered with their dead.

Eric's followers, inspired by the premonition of victory, surged forward triumphantly and made a sortie.

Down from the wall they leaped. A desperate attack was made upon the centre of Olof's line.

As fast as they could aim and fire, Frank and the colonel now picked off men in this place. The centre was melting like rainbow mist.

Mad cheer after cheer the men of Eric sent up. Their women upon the housetops about shrieked and danced in glee.

But one among them knew well what was responsible for their success.

This was Eric, who with battle axe in hand, led the charge.

For hours the conflict had been fiercely raging. Now, however, victory seemed certain to side with the defenders.

Suddenly the centre fell back. Eric's men pressed forward and then turned the columns up and began to double them. The day was won.

In wild confusion Olof's men fled.

Reaching a rocky glen, however, they here made a desperate stand and held their own. Eric recalled his warriors.

But a mighty result had been achieved. Olof the Cruel had met with defeat upon even ground.

It was a disheartening and humiliating fact for him to face, but it was nevertheless true.

The defenders retired to the city's walls by Eric's order. There a respite was held.

As it was Eric's forte to stand upon the defensive another attack was not ordered. But Olof did not renew his assault.

The ground was strewn with Olof's men. His loss had been heavy.

But Eric had lost only a score of warriors. He had been better protected by the walls of the city.

A temporary truce was held. But it was not to last long.

CHAPTER XII.

DEFEAT OF OLAF.

Frank, however, was thinking of the Cutter, and wondering if Olof's men had encountered it in entering the valley.

If so, it was not all unlikely that there had been an encounter between them, and if so Frank was anxious to know the result.

Eric fairly embraced the young inventor, and declared: "Your fire-spears are wonderful. They killed more of Olof's men than my warriors did. But for your help we should now all be massacred."

Frank was anxious to know if he could find a way to get back to the shores of the frozen sea.

He was anxious to know the fate of Barney and Pomp and the Cutter.

Also their ammunition was low, and there was need to replace the store.

If the foe should attack again it was possible that they might succeed in turning the victory.

That Olof had no intention of abandoning the battle was evident.

He was reorganizing his men, and at the earliest moment would again attack.

He was too thorough a war-dog to abandon the field after one repulse.

Frank knew this, and decided upon a daring piece of strategy.

"I tell you we must do it, colonel!" he said. "Our lives depend upon reaching the Cutter and getting some more ammunition."

"I'm with you!" agreed the colonel. "Shall we start now?"

"Yes!"

So it was settled. But Eric looked much downcast.

"My good friends are going and the gods will desert me!" he declared. "They will not come back!"

"Eric," said Frank, impressively, "don't you think my word is sacred?"

"It is blessed by the gods!" declared the Norse chief, fervently.

"Then believe me when I tell you that I shall come back again."

"That is my brother's promise?"

"Yes!"

The Norse chief's face lit up.

"I will believe it," he said. "Olof will be defeated."

It was a rather risky undertaking to leave the Norse city and attempt to get out of the valley.

Olof held the place under the closest surveillance, and only some shrewd stratagem would do it.

Unfortunately this was the Arctic night, as it was called, though it would have been called day in our land, and it never grew dark enough to enable one to move around without being seen.

So that it was impossible to employ darkness as a cover.

However, Frank and the colonel made the start.

Leaving the city on the north side, they gained the cover of some Arctic firs and made their way thus beyond the enemy's lines.

Then they were obliged to descend into the valley and trust to luck to avoid being seen by the foe.

It seemed a certainty after some hours of hard climbing that they would succeed.

They actually reached the upper end of the valley and were walking rapidly along the base of a cliff when they were brought to a halt by a thrilling sound.

The clatter of voices was heard just ahead. It seemed to come from a clump of trees.

"Easy!" said Frank. "We're on ticklish ground! I wonder what's over there?"

"Let's investigate!" said the colonel.

"It might be safer to get on the other side of them first!" said Frank.

"You're right!"

And this they would have proceeded to do so as to easily reach the Frozen Sea in case of pursuit but for an incident.

Suddenly a familiar voice was heard ringing forth in notes of agony:

"Ouch! bad cess to yez for a set of omadhauns! Shure, it's killing me yez are!"

"Barney!" ejaculated Frank.

"That is so!"

"What can it mean?"

Without further hesitation or inquiry the two men dashed into the clump of trees.

And they came upon a thrilling scene.

In the centre of a clearing was the Celt, pale and excited, bound to a stake. A half dozen savage-looking Norsemen were seated about him, laughing and jeering.

Every now and then one of them would jab the point of a javelin into Barney's ribs, and it was this barbarous treatment that had called the cry of pain from his lips.

The appearance of Frank and the colonel upon the scene was exciting.

Both rescuers took in the situation at a glance.

They fired instantly.

Two of the savages fell.

The other four started for the newcomers full tilt.

But again the repeaters spoke. Two more dropped.

The remaining two paused in terror. Frank and the colonel could easily have shot them.

But they allowed them to escape. Then Frank ran forward with a knife.

Barney's joy could not be expressed fully.

"Be me sowl, I'm that glad to see yez, Misther Frank, that I cud imbrace yez!" cried the honest Celt. "Shure, it's dead we thought yez were!"

"But how came you in this scrape?" asked Frank.

"Shure, sor, they nabbed me."

"Where is the Cutter?"

"I belave it's quite safe, sor, out an the ice."

Frank drew a breath of relief.

"Thank Heaven for that," he said. "Now tell me all, Barney."

And this the Celt proceeded to do.

Very succinctly and briefly he told of his capture and his adventures. Frank listened attentively.

"You did what was right, Barney," he said. "Now I suppose Pomp is out there on the ice?"

"Yis, sor."

"Let's go out and hail him as quickly as possible!"

All at once started for the Frozen Sea. None of the Norsemen were encountered.

They reached the shore safely. Then the white sail of the Cutter was seen far out over the ice field.

Out upon the ice the three adventurers ran. No sooner were they well out upon the open surface than Pomp's keen gaze spied them.

The darky had been constantly on the watch for them. A cry of joy escaped him.

"Golly, I done fink dat am all free ob dem!" he muttered. "Marse Frank fo' suah an' de kernel an'—suah's yo' am alibe it am dat I'ishman."

At once Pomp put the Cutter down to her best speed, and ran for the three adventurers. A few moments later they were aboard.

Each had believed the others lost, but all were safe, and now it would have been an easy matter to take leave of the Arctic in perfect safety.

But Frank said:

"I am not going and leave Eric at the mercy of his foes. He has used us well, and I am going to stand by him!"

"Good for you, Frank!" cried the colonel. "I believe that's right!"

Frank went below and returned with a canister filled with dynamite bombs. It had been decided that Pomp should remain with the Cutter, while the other three men should go to the relief of Eric.

With a goodly store of ammunition and the bombs, the party left the Cutter.

Soon they reached the shore, and once more struck down into the valley.

Fortune favored them.

They did not even encounter a foe, and reached the city wall at the spot where they had departed.

Eric was there to meet them, overwhelmed with joy.

"You have kept your word," he declared, rapturously. "The gods again favor us."

Olof's men were again coming to the attack. Frank and his companions had come just in the nick of time.

Soon the Norse warriors were again swarming over the walls of the town. Olof the Cruel led them.

This time they meant to carry the pass or die. It was a terrific onslaught.

Eric's men steadily held their ground. And now came the Waterloo for Olof.

Frank secured a position favorable to his plans, and hurled a bomb into the midst of the attacking party.

The effect was frightful.

They were mowed down like wheat before the sickle.

Moreover, the terrible roar of the exploding bombs and their mysterious character excited the terrors of Olof's men.

They could not face so fearful a destroyer. In vain they tried to rally. Scores lay dead.

But as bomb after bomb came hurtling into their midst, creating fearful havoc, they lost heart.

Then followed a terrible scene of confusion and retreat.

In vain Olof tried to recall them.

They would not heed his call, and fled ingloriously down the valley.

Eric's men pursued them exultantly, and when they returned some hours later one of them had Olof's head.

The strife between the tribes was at an end.

It was hardly likely the north tribe would ever again venture to invade Eric's valley.

And welcome indeed were the explorers to Eric's valley now.

For some weeks Frank and his companions remained in the Polar valley.

Then one day Frank said to Eric:

"My friend, we must leave you to-day. Already the Frozen Sea shows signs of breaking up, and unless we hasten we shall never succeed in getting home."

"Will you not always stay with me?" pleaded the Norse king. "We will make you princes. We will be your slaves."

"Your offer is over kind," said Frank, "but I am compelled to decline."

Eric's face plainly showed his disappointment, and he wrung Frank's hand with silent emotions.

Preparations for leaving the Polar Continent were quickly made.

Already the air had grown warmer and there were signs of the appearance of the sun.

The ice also showed signs of breaking up.

A large crowd gathered at the shore to bid adieu to their visitors from the south land.

Eric embraced all four voyagers.

Then the Cutter's propeller began to revolve, the ratchets cut into the ice, and it shot forward.

Soon the multitude from shore faded, and then the Polar Continent became but a line upon the horizon.

The Arctic trip in one respect was at an end.

All were eager now to get back home again, but the thrilling experiences of their voyage were not yet ended.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END.

Straight to the southward the Cutter kept her rapid course.

It was all smooth going now, and rapid progress was made.

In due time the lower verge of the Frozen Sea was reached. Then began a perilous journey over the ice fields.

This proved slow work.

Weeks passed by, and Frank began to worry for fear that they would not reach the Bay before the Iris should leave.

This would mean another six months in those dreary solitudes.

Such a thing could not be looked forward to with any degree of pleasure. All had tired of eternal snow and ice.

But at last clear sailing was at length found, and the Cutter bowled on merrily for a hundred miles.

Then came a rough section again. The ice pack was in places several hundred feet high.

Wide detours were made, but after much time consumed this way Frank said one morning:

"We are only twenty-five miles from the Bay. If we reach it to-morrow we shall be in time."

But the words had barely escaped his lips when a terrible thing happened.

There was a terrific shock. A grinding sound and then all darkness. The Cutter was motionless.

Frank and the others had been knocked half insensible.

Frank was the first to recover. He crawled out of a corner and gasped:

"For the love of Heaven, what has happened? Are we crushed?"

"I done fink dat am so, sah!" cried Pomp, in terror. "Dis chile he was steering, an' jes' as we was goin' round a big pinnacle of ice, it done topple over and fall on us!"

The tons of ice had crushed the Cutter beyond all hopes of redemption. She was forever ruined.

To repair her was impossible. The situation was a bleak one.

Frank saw his wonderful invention, the pride of his heart, thus destroyed before his eyes.

All plucked up courage and set out.

Pluckily the explorers kept on until they reached the point where the Iris was to meet them.

The yacht was not there.

Upon a wooden sign was printed the following:

"Will come back in another six months!"

"Heavens!" gasped Col. Heeley. "We are lost! We cannot live here six months!"

But at that moment a shrill whistle broke the solitudes. Around a bend in the harbor glided the yacht.

She had taken the wrong channel southward and had been obliged to return. A few moments later the overjoyed explorers were aboard.

A few months later they reached New York safe and sound. The Arctic expedition was over.

All reaped the richest of praise and fame. Col. Heeley made his fortune on the lecture platform.

But Frank Reade, Jr., and Barney and Pomp went home to Readestown. But the young inventor claims that he will yet produce something even more wonderful than the Electric Snow Cutter. May he succeed.

THE END.

Read "FRANK READE, JR.'S ELECTRIC BUCKBOARD; OR, THRILLING ADVENTURES IN NORTH AUSTRALIA," which will be the next number (42) of "Frank Reade Weekly Magazine."

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